

floor to say thank you to my colleagues on both sides of the aisle for their thoughts, their cards, their prayers, and for being my friends.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. KINGSTON. Please, would you? If the gentleman would yield to me, I would request that our colleagues speak under unanimous-consent agreement. I would greatly appreciate that because this is our hour, and we would like to make a few discussions. But I would certainly yield for unanimous-consent agreement.

Mr. HOYER. Can I ask unanimous consent that the gentleman's hour be extended by whatever period of time I take? I do not know whether that is an appropriate unanimous-consent request, but that is the unanimous-consent request I make.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BARR of Georgia). I am not sure that would be in order, but certainly the gentleman from Pennsylvania continues to have the floor.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, how much time do I have remaining?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman has 4 minutes remaining.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. I yield to the gentleman from Maryland.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I certainly will accommodate our friend from Georgia, but let me say, as someone who has worked very, very closely with the gentleman from Pennsylvania for many, many years, he has been the leader in this Congress on the formation, and the growth, and flourishing of the Fire Service Caucus. He has been a leader in foreign affairs, a leader on the Committee on Armed Services, and a leader in so many other efforts on behalf of his constituents and on behalf of this country.

I want him to, however, in this period of time when we are—because he is such an able Member—when we are contending so heartily here, Mr. Speaker, I want him to rest, and I want him to take care of himself, not work those 7 days a week, 20-hour days that he has been working, and I want to say we welcome you back on this side of the aisle.

I have often said that it is unfortunate that people see us on this floor usually contending about the 20 percent of the issues that are contentious and we have disagreements on, and they sometimes, I think, believe that we do not interact with one another as human beings, as colleagues, and as people who care about this country and work together on an overwhelming majority of issues to make our country a better place for our children, our constituents, and all Americans, and so I join with, I know, my other colleagues in welcoming CURT WELDON from Pennsylvania back to the House. We share his joy and the joy of his family that the genius of medical technology has enabled him to come back whole and indeed from those with whom I have

talked to have had this operating feeling much better than he did before, and I am confident that he is going to continue to be one of the most able, involved, effective Members in this body.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. I thank my colleague.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Indiana.

Mr. ROEMER. I just want to welcome you back. I think around here we are not bipartisan enough, and certainly the bipartisanship on the Democratic side extends to this Republican Member, Mr. WELDON from Pennsylvania.

I know a lot of firefighters in the Third District of Indiana were praying for you, for your good health, and we are delighted to see you back, and we miss some of that fiery speech making that you give on the floor as well, too.

So, welcome back.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. I yield to the gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. OBEY].

Mr. OBEY. I simply would like to welcome the gentleman back also, and I say that his comments remind me of the late Claude Pepper when Claude came back after open heart surgery. I heard him at a senior citizen convention. They gave him a big round of applause, and he said, "I want to thank you from the bottom of a very repaired heart."

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BALANCING THE BUDGET

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, the gentleman from Georgia [Mr. KINGSTON] is recognized for 50 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, I am certainly glad to join the gentlemen in welcoming the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. WELDON] back. We are glad to have him with us, and Democrats and Republicans during this stressful period of negotiations can certainly agree on that and keep in mind what is the most important thing.

Mr. Speaker, as of November 8, 1995, our national debt was \$4,984,737,460,958.92.

Now that was on the 8th of November. On the 13th, which is today, that figure has risen to \$4,985,913,011,032.65. We advance each week in terms of almost \$3 billion.

Mr. Speaker, this debt is passed on to our children.

Now I have a 7-year-old daughter, and the other day, as I was coming off the floor making my daily phone call home, Ann asked me, "Daddy, what were you voting on?" And it was, as you will recall, Mr. Speaker, last week right after the vote on increasing the debt ceiling was held, and I had just voted to increase the debt ceiling on my 7-year-old, and I think that just having that happen immediately underscored the importance to me of

what we are trying to do when we talk about balancing the budget. It is not academic, it is something that my 7-year-old daughter, her 5-year-old brother, her 10-year-old brother, and her 12-year-old sister will be having to pay. A child born today, Mr. Speaker, owes \$187,000 in interest on the national debt during his or her 75-year lifetime, and that does not even pay the principal down.

Mr. Speaker, that is why I think it is so important right now for us to keep in mind why we are working late tonight, why are we working probably through Thanksgiving and maybe through Christmas. But we need to balance the budget for our children's children.

Previous speaker tonight was talking about education and education being an investment. I could not agree with that statement more. But I can tell you another investment, and that is keeping America from going broke, and that is why it is so important for us to support this Republican plan to balance the 7-year budget, because you see, Mr. Speaker, in the year 2002 the Republican balanced budget plan has a zero deficit, but the President's plan has a \$200 billion deficit in the year 2002. The differences are real.

We have a real bill here. We want to balance the budget. We do not want to close government down. But we have got to do this for our children.

Mr. WELDON from Florida has joined us, and I would like to yield the floor to him. I see he has a chart and also the gentleman from Illinois [Mr. LAHOOD].

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding, and I cannot agree with you more on the importance of balancing our budget for the sake of our children and for our children's children.

The United States has a longstanding history of doing what is right in the setting of adversity, in difficult times coming to the right conclusions, and I believe that today our Nation is really at that point. I think when the other body failed to ratify the balanced budget amendment and our dollar decreased from about 106 yen to about 80 yen, I think that gave the American people a good glimpse of what happens to a nation that truly does spend more than it takes in. Its currency is ultimately worth nothing, and the implications for that on our entire economic system is really huge, and I cannot understand why the President will not join us in this historic effort to restore fiscal sanity to our budgeting process and to make sure that our children are not left bankrupt, but do inherit a brighter and better future, and I do want to take a minute to talk a little bit about this chart because the President has been talking about saving Medicare, and I personally think it is disgraceful for him to be carrying on like this because everybody knows that in his health care plan that he was talking about back in 1993, he was talking

about taking billions of dollars out of the Medicare plan. Now he is saying that he wants to prevent or stop some of the changes we want to make in the Medicare plan, but what he is engaging in I think is deceptive because, if you look at what we are doing right now with the Medicare plan, the seniors currently pick up about 31.5 percent of the premium. That is about \$42 a month.

Now this is the part B. The part A is the hospital insurance fund, and that comes out of people's Federal withholding as a separate tax. This is the part B plan. This covers physician services as well as certain outpatient services, and currently today the average senior spends about \$42 a month for that, and that actually only consists of about 31.5 percent of premium. The actual total cost per month is about \$130.

Now this was originally a 50-50 split back in 1964 when the program was created, and in an effort to help seniors cope with limited budgets that has been allowed to go down to 31.5 percent, and what we do in our plan is we fix it at that level.

□ 2200

What the President wants to do is let that share, the part seniors pick up, shrink down to 25 percent. But what he does not talk about is who is going to pick up the rest of this. This gets right back to what the gentleman from Georgia [Mr. KINGSTON] was talking about. We do not have this. He wants to go out and borrow this money from our children to pay for this difference. We want to keep this right at this level here.

The most shameful thing in all this is that he only wants to do this for 1 year, for 1 year, so that he can get the votes of senior citizens, and then beginning in 1997 and 1998 and 1999 and 2000 and 2001 and 2002, he wants to let the senior citizens, premiums go up on part B so that in the end, in the Clinton proposal, they will be paying \$83 a month and in the Republican proposal they will be spending \$90 a month.

Why is he doing this? Why is he doing this right now? He is doing this because he wants their votes. He said to the American people back in 1992 that he would give them a middle-class tax cut. In 1993 he changed his mind. He said he was going to change welfare as we know it. Then he never did that. He said he was going to put forward a 5-year balanced budget proposal, and he never did. I personally think what he is doing here is playing politics with the votes of senior citizens.

Mr. LAHOOD. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. KINGSTON. I yield to the gentleman from Illinois.

Mr. LAHOOD. Let me just also indicate something else that I think is going on. There has been a campaign throughout the country on behalf of the Democrats to try and scare senior citizens into believing that Republicans want to throw senior citizens off

of Medicare, that we want to eliminate Medicare, that we want to do something drastic to Medicare, when the truth of the matter is that three of the President's own Cabinet members have told us that if we do not do something to reform, to preserve, to protect the Medicare Program, it will be broke.

Yet our friends on the other side of the aisle would have you believe that we can keep continuing doing what we have been doing, but the point is there are a number of people coming into the system, health care costs are going up, and we want to try and strengthen and preserve the program. We do not want to throw senior citizens off. We do not want to reduce the benefit. We want to preserve and protect the program.

Mr. HAYWORTH. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. KINGSTON. I yield to the gentleman from Arizona.

Mr. HAYWORTH. I thank my friend, the gentleman from Illinois. He makes a very valid point. Indeed, as my other colleagues have gone out to do town halls in their districts, also perhaps via mail, asking through questionnaires what is going on, I think the gentleman from Illinois makes a point that cannot be stated enough. A bipartisan group, including three of President Clinton's own Cabinet officers, say we have to fix this because if we do nothing, the program goes broke.

The other thing we need to state, because somehow, through the midst of deliberate disinformation and an advertising campaign, one simple fact has also been ignored. We need to state it ad nauseum. That is this: that under our plan for Medicare plus, average expenditures per beneficiaries increase from \$4,800 this year to \$6,700 in the year 2002. No doubt earlier in this special order that fact has been brought up, but I daresay it is something that needs to be repeated again and again and again. And, indeed, we hear from people in our districts, we hear from people in our States tonight via the telefax, just before I walked in on the floor, the Epsteins from Arizona, a pair of self-described seasoned citizens, to use the expression of one of our friends from radio fame, write me and say this: "Stay the course. Stick with present budget. We support the efforts of the 104th Congress. Good luck. Keep the faith."

Ms. Nelson from Clarksdale, AZ, called in tonight with a three-word message: "Don't back down."

Mr. LAHOOD. Mr. Speaker, I think this. I think when people are presented with the facts, not a 30-second commercial, because if you tell people a lie often enough, they will believe it, so when people are not told the facts they begin to believe that that is the truth. But when people are presented with the facts, which you have just presented, that we want to preserve and protect, and that their benefit is not going to be cut, it is not going to be decreased, they begin to get the correct information and begin to know that we are try-

ing to strengthen, to preserve, to protect a program that has worked well.

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, one thing to keep in mind is that under the 7-year balanced budget plan, we are increasing overall spending by \$3 trillion instead of \$4 trillion. Four trillion dollars would keep us on the road to bankruptcy, but we are increasing it \$3 trillion, and in the same time, during the same period of time, balancing the budget; Medicare spending, as you know, goes from \$178 billion to \$286 billion.

Let me repeat, and I see the gentleman from Kentucky wants to make a point on this, we are going from \$178 billion to \$286 billion during that 7-year time. That is an increase in Medicare, even if you have a Democrat deficit disorder.

Mr. JONES. If the gentleman will continue to yield, I would like to ask the gentleman, what is so extreme about saving Medicare, balancing the budget, reforming welfare, giving tax breaks to families with children? What is so extreme? We keep hearing the word "extreme" today, used on us, that we are trying to do extreme things.

If we are extreme, then they are saying that the American people are extreme. The President keeps saying "extreme." I do not see anything extreme in what we are doing. We are doing exactly what the American people have asked us to do.

Mr. WELDON of Florida. If the gentleman will continue to yield, I would like to comment on that, I remember when I was a kid growing up, somebody once called me a name. I do not know if they called me a liar or whatever. I went to my daddy and I was upset, and I said, why are they doing that? And he said something to me that I will never forget. He said, "A lot of times when people call you names, they have a problem in that area themselves, and they are externalizing it on you, but they really, actually have the problem."

I want to show you some numbers that I think convinces me how extreme the situation is here with our colleagues on the left side of the aisle and with the White House. Bill Clinton said he was going to balance the budget in 5 years, back in 1992. He did not present a balanced budget in 1993 after he was elected, he did not present it in 1994, he did not present it in 1995. Then after we put our budget on the table, he finally brought forth his 10-year budget.

When he stood over here and said that he would put forward a budget using the CBO numbers, he did not do that. His numbers that he ultimately presented to us, after he was shamed into having to produce something, his 10-year budget was based on his budget office, so we had the CBO look at his numbers. Look at this. It goes from \$196 billion to \$209 billion at the end of 10 years. There is absolutely no attempt to balance the books here. I would not call this extreme, personally, I would call this irresponsible.

Mr. HAYWORTH. If the gentleman will continue to yield, I think we go to that word "extreme" and use it in a couple of different directions. I think, with reference to what my good friend, the gentleman from Florida, just outlines, especially in the wake of the curious behavior of this Nation's Chief Executive, who says one thing one day and something else the next day, I think we have to say, "This is extremely confusing." And with reference to extremism being used with our plans, extremism, I think we can simply say that what we have talked about, saving, protecting, my good friend, and defending Medicare through Medicare plus, genuine welfare reform, tax cuts for the middle class, and a glide path to a balanced budget in 7 years, I think we have to describe that as being extremely, extremely commonsensical.

Mr. LAHOOD. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will continue to yield further, I want to make a point here for the people that happen to be watching our discussion. For those people who do not know it, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. WELDON] is a doctor. He is a freshman Member of the 104th Congress. I guess, what, he was a family practitioner, is that correct?

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Sort of. I was an internist. A family practitioner for senior citizens.

Mr. LAHOOD. And I assume you probably had as your patients senior citizens.

Mr. WELDON of Florida. About half my practice.

Mr. LAHOOD. Now, would anybody believe that Dr. DAVE WELDON, the gentleman from Florida, now a Member of the 104th Congress, would want to throw any of his patients off of Medicare, would want them to be deprived of medical care? Of course they would not. And for someone like the gentleman from Florida [Mr. WELDON], now a Congressman, to be accused by people on the other side of the aisle of being hard-hearted or wanting to throw people off of Medicare is just simply nonsense.

I just want the American people to know that the gentleman from Florida, Dr. WELDON, comes here as a practitioner of medicine for senior citizens. Who could care more about the seniors of our country than one who has practiced medicine for senior citizens? I think it is an important point.

Mr. CHABOT. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. KINGSTON. I yield to the gentleman from Ohio.

Mr. CHABOT. Getting back to what the gentleman from Arizona [Mr. HAYWORTH] said, what is extreme, I think what is really extreme would be to go along with what the President has been posturing to do. That is, to continue to bankrupt this Nation by not balancing the budget. That was the message that I heard, and I have been hearing all year, is it is time finally to balance the budget.

I have parents. My parents are in their seventies. They are both on Medicare. They both receive Social Security. We are trying to save Medicare for the elderly folks in this country so it is there when we are going to be using it. I also have little kids. I have a daughter that is 13, I have a son that is 6 years old. What has been happening in this country over the past couple of decades, however, is huge debt has been built up and spent, and we are turning it over to these kids and saying, "You are going to pay this debt, because we have not been able to do it. We have not had a Congress that has had the guts to balance the budget."

We have one now. We have got a Congress that is saying, "We are no longer going to spend this Nation into bankruptcy." I hope and I pray that the President of the United States will work with us, so we can cut out all this posturing and balance the budget, cut taxes, and do the things which we promised to do. I think the American people, as they learn what the overall plan is, will be supportive. I am from Cincinnati, and the calls that I got today were 7 to 1 saying, "Stick to your guns, don't back down, don't back down to the President; balance the budget." That is what I, for one, intend to do.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will continue to yield, I got the same type of phone calls today. I just want to go back to this extremism that is coming from the President and the liberals.

If you want to talk about extremism, I have a daughter that is 13 also, I would say to the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. CHABOT]. If you project out, if nothing is done to balance our budget to get this spending under control, in the year 2030 my daughter, midway through her life and through her career, will have hanging over her head not—you know, today we have approximately a \$5 trillion debt. That is the debt. But in the year 2030, let us look at this extreme number, the deficit spending for one year, just one year, will be \$4 trillion. That is mind-boggling. We cannot continue, we cannot go on and survive as a Nation with that kind of spending.

Mr. CHABOT. If the gentleman will continue to yield, just following up on the point about what a balanced budget means, it means real things to real American citizens, if we can finally balance the budget.

For example, a person who buys a home, say they spend \$75,000 for a home, and there is a 30-year loan for that home. If we can balance the budget, interest rates are estimated to go down by about 2 percent. So for that family who buys that home over the time that they pay for that home, they would save \$37,000 over the life of that loan if we can just balance the budget. It will be money in people's pockets so the economy can thrive, and we will have people working rather than being on unemployment or being on welfare.

There will be a lot of benefits. It will mean good things for American citizens if we can balance this budget.

Mr. KINGSTON. If the gentleman would yield, I am wondering, since you are from Cincinnati, there was a cartoon in one of the Cincinnati papers which showed a man and woman sitting around the kitchen tables paying their bills. They had a calculator and a big stack of envelopes going out to the companies that they owed money to, and the woman turns to her husband and says, "Honey, I think we need to increase our debt ceiling."

What that shows is that this is real. This means something to your daughter in Kentucky, and your family back in Ohio with that 30-year mortgage. This is real money that we are talking about.

I was very disappointed last week, four of you folks are freshmen, the gentleman from Kentucky, Mr. LEWIS, and I were here last year. But it was a shock to all of us when the President actually went golfing. The House passed a debt ceiling increase and continuing resolution to try to balance the budget, and the President held a press conference saying that he was going to veto it and then goes to play golf, the rich man's sport.

While the Federal employees in 1 hour and 45 minutes will be furloughed, their President who claims to be their champion left to play golf. I hope it was a good round. I do not play. I do not know how to play. I have never been a member of the country club like the President. But a lot of Federal workers in my area do not play golf. And tomorrow when they wake up and do not have a job, they are not going to be playing golf. The President was playing golf.

Mr. HAYWORTH. I thank my friend from Georgia and I think he brings up several good points in terms of the behavior of the gentleman who sits at the other end of Pennsylvania Ave.

It has been curious throughout his term, and indeed the gentleman from North Carolina [Mr. TAYLOR] in a radio response to the gentleman from the other end of Pennsylvania Ave. once speculated that perhaps we ought to constitutionally set up a new office and call it "Campaigner in Chief," so that the gentleman at the other end of Pennsylvania Ave. can go around and make the speeches and get people to like him, to really like him. In the meantime, we ought to find a genuine chief executive who is willing to join with us and govern.

It is not my intent to pour salt in the wounds rhetorically, but it is very curious that much of what candidate Clinton spoke of in 1992, much of what the good doctor repeated here tonight, is included in what we have sent to him that he chose to veto.

There comes a time when regardless of party label, we are called upon to join together and govern. And if we are to be candid, while there are those firm

in their resolve who have called me to-night, there are others who have contacted me. My wife gave me the number of a family in Scottsdale, AR. A little boy doing a school project needed our address, so I called him. He was surprised to hear from his Congressman.

His dad got on the phone and said, "Congressman, I am really worried about the Government shutting down tomorrow." And I said, "Sir, I share your concern. We in this Chamber did what we could, what is within our rights to do, and the President chose not to go along with it." The reason we did it was not to box anyone into a corner, but for the very reasons that my good friend, the gentleman from Kentucky, and my good friend, the gentleman from Ohio mentioned, and that is as genuine as our concern is for the seniors of this country, we also have great concern for our children and generations yet unborn.

The fact is, my little boy, John Micah, who will turn 2 December 2, has hanging over his head if we do not make changes, if we maintain the status quo with the legislative equivalent of chewing gum and baling wire, if we continue to try and keep things going as they are, John Micah over the course of his lifetime will pay over \$185,000 just on the debt. Just to service the debt. That is unconscionable. We cannot do that to our children. That is why we are making the tough decisions we have to make to change what is going on.

If it takes this action, as regrettable as this action may be, far better to take this action to change the course of what has gone on, to change the thinking within this Chamber, yes, within this beltway, yes, but to change the thinking to correspond with what we are hearing from the great heartland of America.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Florida, my good friend.

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, that was very, very eloquently said. I just want to harken back to this chart, because this is the balanced budget of the man who plays golf when the House and the Senate were trying to do the Nation's business.

We sent a continuing resolution to him and we sent a debt ceiling increase to him that had some responsible features in it, and he went off and played golf. I personally thought that that said volumes about his commitment to these principles.

Mr. HAYWORTH. There is one other example that I think we should bring up in the wake of that horrible, horrible assassination in Israel. During the course of the state funeral when representatives from both parties joined the President to fly to Israel, and granted it was a difficult time emotionally for the President, we understand that. But during the course of time spent in the air that exceeded 24 hours, I think something like 26 hours, to hear from our leadership in this

House that their interaction with our Chief Executive consisted of a "Thank you" and a hand wave, and that was the extent of the interaction, I have to question this.

Why is it that the Chief Executive is happy to keep Air Force One on a runway at LAX and pay \$200 for a haircut and take the time to do that as he did a couple of years ago, and then not talk to the leadership of these two bodies to solve the problems we face.

There comes a time when we have to have responsible leadership, and it absolutely astounds me. I know, colleagues, when we raised our hands and took the oath of office we do so to govern with the consent of the governed. We were elected, and so too was that gentleman at the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue.

Again this evening, Mr. Speaker, and colleagues, to those watching tonight, we extend the hand. Mr. President, join with us and govern. The American people deserve no less.

It is astounding behavior and it is quizzical to say the least. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield to the gentleman from Florida [Mr. WELDON].

Mr. WELDON of Florida. The gentleman from Arizona raises a whole host of points and it harkens back to what I talked about earlier. The President campaigned in 1992 saying that he was going to put forth a balanced budget and balance the budget in 5 years. He put forward nothing in 1993, nothing in 1994, nothing in 1995. And finally, after we put our budget, he came out with this belated, ridiculous attempt to balance the budget, which has red numbers straight through the end of the 10 years. Hence, it would still be \$209 billion.

He said he would change welfare as we know it. He never did. He said he would give the middle class a tax break. He never did. I think we have a real credibility problem here. I have some very, very serious concerns about whether he will ever seriously agree that we need to build a better future for our children, for the young son of the gentleman from Arizona, and my 9-year-old daughter, for the daughter of the gentleman from Ohio, and the daughter of the gentleman from Kentucky, and for the millions and millions of children out there.

Mr. Speaker, what is disgraceful is to play politics with all of this and try to buy votes by telling one group, "We will give you a slightly better deal" and then to turn around and raise their interest rates or raise their premiums or raise their taxes down the road, after he has gotten elected.

Mr. Speaker, this is not leadership. As far as I am concerned, this is playing politics with the very future of our Nation, the future for our children and our grandchildren, and this is not what made America great.

Mr. CHABOT. Mr. Speaker, I think the gentleman from Florida makes some very good points. Candidate Clin-

ton was very different, unfortunately, from President Clinton.

As the gentleman implied, candidate Clinton had said that he was going to end welfare as we know it. I agreed. I remember the commercial like it was on yesterday when he said that, and he made some very good points. I agreed with everything he said. We do need to change welfare, and that is something we are doing in our balanced budget this year. We really are changing welfare as we know it.

Mr. Speaker, welfare has become, rather than temporary help for the truly needy, far too often a permanent way of life. It has been counterproductive. It has unfortunately hurt children all over this country.

Candidate Clinton also said that he was going to give us a middle-class tax cut. I agreed with him completely that we needed to do that. Unfortunately, President Clinton gave us one of the largest tax increases in our history.

What we did, this new Congress this year, we really did give the middle class a tax cut. Seventy-five percent of the tax cuts go to people who make less than \$75,000.

Mr. Speaker, I hear over and over here in this particular body from some of the folks on the other side of the aisle here that we are cutting Medicare, which we are not because we are increasing Medicare, to give tax cuts, supposedly, to the rich. When, in fact, as I said, the tax cuts predominately go to the middle class of this Nation where they should go.

One final point I would like to make about something the President said during the campaign is he indicated he was going to be tough on the death penalty, tough on crime. In this bill that the President has just vetoed which increased the debt ceiling, there was also habeas corpus reform. What that means, basically, is the death penalty in this country, of which I am a strong believer.

Eighty percent of the people in this country believe in the death penalty. But after conviction, we allow it to drag on. People are on death row for 15, 16, 20 years. We finally have legislation which reforms the death penalty in this country and cuts down the amount of time between the imposition of the sentence and actually carrying out the sentence. That was in the bill. The President said he was for it. Unfortunately, he vetoed that as well.

Mr. Speaker, I believe very strongly that we were sent here for a reason. I believe we should try to work with the President, and I wish he would work with us for the betterment of all the people in this country.

Again, as the gentleman from Arizona said, I think we should reach out to the President, just as the Speaker NEWT GINGRICH, and the majority leader, BOB DOLE as we speak here now are apparently meeting at the White House with the President. I hope some good comes from that.

Mr. LEWIS of Kentucky. Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleagues,

maybe can they answer this; What really have the President and the liberals offered in the 104th Congress, other than name calling? What have they offered?

Have they offered welfare reform? Have they offered tax breaks for the middle class? Have they offered to save Medicare? Have they offered to balance the budget? What have they offered?

Yes, the President gave us a bogus balanced budget that will not reach balance by the year 2002. In fact it would be \$209 billion in deficit spending. What have they done?

They have had the Congress for 40 years and we are \$5 trillion in debt. In 1965, the Great Society was started to win the war on poverty. We have more people in poverty today than when it started. We have more teenage pregnancy. We have more crime. We have more illiteracy. I mean, what have they done in 40 years and what have they offered this year?

Mr. HAYWORTH. If the gentleman would yield, I think in fairness we do need to point out one thing that the liberals offered and it came very late, indeed, in the last nanosecond of the 11th hour as we stood on this floor and talked about the compelling need for Medicare reform and cited the report. And I would ask the gentleman from Florida if he could get the poster and hold it up again.

We cited what three of President Clinton's own Cabinet officers signed off on in April. "The present financing schedule for the program, the Medicare program, is sufficient to ensure the payment of benefits only over the next 7 years."

When we saw that, and chose in the wake of that report last spring to move to protect and preserve and defend Medicare, our friends on the other side, the liberals, stepped forward with a Band-Aid. They said, OK, we will do a little tinkering around the edges.

Indeed, in the words of one wire service dispatch, in the words of one political observer, in his opinion it amounted to a "deathbed conversion." At the last nanosecond, they stepped forward with a Band-Aid.

Mr. Speaker, I will just make one point and then I will be happy to yield to my friend from Georgia. I heard earlier in this hour the gentleman from Pennsylvania stand in the well and talk about the surgery he needed to return to this Chamber with vitality. It was not easy surgery. He stayed the course and got the medical work done.

Mr. Speaker, I daresay our friend from Pennsylvania and his example serves as a metaphor for what we face with these programs. It takes surgery, not a Band-Aid, to solve the problem. But that is the only thing that has come from the liberal establishment. And as we move past a Great Society, let us go to a better society.

Mr. Speaker, I yield now to the gentleman from Georgia, my friend.

□ 2230

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, on this last-minute PR solution, more than anything, it was just to say we are in it, too. It calls for a commission to study Medicare. Here we have a group of professional trustees who study Medicare and they have said it is going broke. So what did the other party want to do? They wanted to study it even more.

Mr. LAHOOD. Mr. Speaker, I think the cleverest part of the argument that is made over here about this statement is that we have had those reports in the past. So we have had them in the past, and we do not want to do anything with it. Some of us came here with the idea that when you get a report like that and that there are people in the country who have benefited from these programs, and nobody will deny that Medicare has been a good program, we feel a responsibility to try and reform the program to preserve it, to protect it for the senior citizens, not simply to say, as our friends on the other side of the aisle would say, oh, we have heard those reports before. Some of us feel a responsibility to do something about it when you get a report from three Cabinet members from the President's own Cabinet.

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, let me ask the freshmen, can you imagine coming to a body where they are saying something is going broke and you are supposed to waive it and you are saying, they always say it is going broke. We just have to get through the next 2 years. That is my concern. Would any of you be able to go home and run on that platform that you saw that report and ignored it?

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Absolutely not. That is a very good question. It leads to an important issue on the Medicare Program. The tax on working people to keep the Medicare Program solvent has been raised 23 times since the program was initiated.

Let me just say that, as the gentleman from Illinois mentioned earlier, I am a practicing physician. I still see patients occasionally. The Medicare Program has been a great program. It provides the resources so that our seniors can get good quality medical care in their senior years. I think it is one of the primary things contributing to the dramatic increase in life expectancy for seniors.

When I was in medical school, when I was in college, the average life expectancy for a male, I think, was about 70 or 71. Just in the past 15 years or so it has gone up to about 78. That dramatic improvement, I think, is directly attributable to the good quality medical care that our seniors get. But there have been problems with keeping the program properly funded as there is a problem right now, as this chart next to me indicates, three Clinton Cabinet officials testifying to the fact that there are problems in keeping the program properly funded.

Mr. LAHOOD. Mr. Speaker, let me just cite a couple of examples. Whenever I have been in a room of senior citizens, I say, have any of you had a problem with billing or with some kind of complication with Medicare? Every hand in the room goes up.

A woman from Tremont, IL, came up to me at the Tremont Turkey Festival. She gave me a check. She said: "Congressman, I am 80 years old. Medicare has been a good program. I just received this check from Medicare for 2 cents. How much does it cost to process a check for 2 cents?"

A gentleman came to me at a meeting in Pekin, IL, at a town meeting that I had. He said: "I had a procedure done, I am on Medicare, I had a procedure done. I got a bill from the anesthesiologist for \$8,000. I took it back to him and I said: Could this be right? He said: 'No, it should have been \$800.' But Medicare paid \$8,000."

One other example: A gentleman came to my office in Jacksonville, IL. He received a bill from the hospital 40 days after he had been in there. The first item, intensive care, \$36,000; he said: "I was never in intensive care." Another item down below: Other services, \$11,000. He says: "I do not know what those were."

Are there problems with the Medicare Program? Are there things that need to be fixed? Of course there are. Ask anybody who is receiving Medicare and they will tell you that. That is what we are trying to do, play the responsible role and fix a good program and reform it to save money for people who will want to use the program currently and in the future.

Mr. CHABOT. Mr. Speaker, I carry around here in my wallet an article that I clipped out of the newspaper. We verified this article. It is accurate. It is going to take me just a few seconds to read this. It is about Medicare, one of the problems with it.

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, we are going to have about 7 minutes left. After the gentleman reads that, I would like everyone to sort of wrap up:

Mr. CHABOT. "Representative JOE KNOLLENBERG"—and we all know JOE here—"Michigan Republican, tells the story of a Michigan woman named Jean English, who while going through the mail of her recently deceased brother found a bill for his last hospital stay. Her brother, who suffered a terminal illness, died only a few days after being admitted.

"The bill for the four-day period came to \$368,511.09. All of it had been forwarded to Medicare for payment. Shocked by the expense, Mrs. English called the hospital for an explanation. What she got was a 14-page itemized statement.

"The greatest expense? A 7-hour stay in the emergency room, according to the bill, required \$347,982.01 worth of supplies."

Just think of that, just 7 hours, \$347,000 worth of supplies.

"Well, after much hemming and hawing," says the Congressman, "the

hospital admitted that it had made a mistake. Oops. Instead of \$347,982.01, the actual charge should have been \$61.30. That is right, \$61.30. An overcharge of \$347,920.71."

The problem was found. End of story? No. The errant bill had been sent to Medicare and paid by Medicare. That is right, they had paid the bill.

That is just the tip of the iceberg. We have to find waste where it exists and stop that waste from happening but we do not have to cut anybody's Medicare at all. We want to save it so it is there for the seniors nowadays and for future generations.

Mr. LAHOOD. That is what we call waste, fraud, and abuse. That is an area that anybody that has been involved with Medicare, any senior citizen will tell you, there are all kinds of problems that people face. Some of us feel a responsibility to reform this program, to weed out, to ferret out the waste, fraud, and abuse and save the taxpayers millions and billions of dollars because we want to preserve the program. In order to do that we have to make these kinds of reforms that we are talking about.

Mr. HAYWORTH. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will continue to yield, I think some very valid points have been raised. Once again our friend from Ohio offers graphic evidence, anecdotal evidence of what can go wrong. My friend from Illinois made a very valid point, reaffirmed to me by the senior citizens of the Sixth District of Arizona. Waste, fraud and abuse is a shocking part of this problem. It is one element of the problem in dealing with health care coverage for seniors.

But, again, what we have to point out, and in my couple of moments here before we wrap up, I want to point out a couple of things. First of all, what we are doing with Medicare is improving and protecting and preserving the system, taking the average beneficiaries, cash award of \$4,800 this year, increasing it to \$6,700 by the year 2002. Also, what we are doing are expanding the choices, giving people more choices, not forcing anyone into the program. But if people like the current system, they are certainly welcome to keep this system.

The sad thing is that younger people have no choice. As I mentioned earlier, my young son, if we change nothing will pay over \$185,000 in taxes just on interest on the debt during the course of his lifetime. To the President's credit he did something called general rational accounting in his last budget where he projected the services for the next generation of Americans if we do not change anything, if we do not right size this Government. And taxpayers of the future, the average taxpayer would have to surrender 82 percent of his income in taxes to the Federal Government. We have seen it rise exponentially, from 3 percent of the average family of four's income in 1948 to almost one-quarter of the average family's income in 1994. We have to change

that not to build a great society but to build an even better society.

Mr. LEWIS of Kentucky. Mr. Speaker, just as Mr. HAYWORTH said, we have to do something and we have to do it now. My mother and father are both 78 years old. My daughter is 13. I have a son that is 24 years old. We have to save Medicare for my mother and my father. We have to balance the budget for my daughter and my son. We have to provide for the future. We have to save the economic viability of this country. And that is what we are all about.

It is beyond politics. We are serious. We want to save a country that is going to be a country that is going to provide the best living opportunities for our children and for our senior citizens. I think we can do no less. The time has come. We have a window of opportunity to do it now. And if we do not do it now, I am afraid it is going to be too late. So I think we have to stop the political rhetoric that is coming from the White House and from the other side. And we have to get serious and do something. I think we face a crisis as great as any crisis we have ever faced in this country and now as I said is the time to do it before it is too late.

I want a future for my mother and my father where they can have a good medical care. I want a future for my daughter and my son where they will not have to spend \$187,000 just on the interest on the debt, where they will not have a tax rate of 82 percent. I want a nation that is going to be strong and the greatest Nation to continue to be the greatest Nation on the face of this Earth.

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Florida [Mr. WELDON].

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from Georgia is very gracious. I guess I would like to wrap up by pointing out that President Bill Clinton ran in 1992 as the candidate for change and his behavior over the past 2 or 3 days, I think, clearly indicates that though he ran as a candidate for change he is the President of the status quo. The status quo is not going to get us into the next century for a brighter, better and more prosperous future for ourselves and for our children.

He ran saying that he was going to balance the budget and never presented to us a balanced budget proposal. He ran saying that he was going to end welfare as we know it, and he never presented a plan to be able to do that. And he also ran saying that he was going to give us a middle-class tax cut, and what he gave us was a tax increase. And furthermore, for him to do absolutely nothing in the area of preserving and protecting Medicare and making sure that it will be there for our seniors because, Mr. Speaker, my colleagues, we will agree if the Nation is bankrupt, nobody will get good quality medical care, including our seniors.

And we have put forward these proposals to the President who keeps vetoing them and vetoing them. I personally think this is morally wrong for him to do that. He should be willing to sit down and negotiate with us and try to come to terms, but he is not doing that. And he really is playing politics with these issues, particularly in the area of Medicare.

We have put forward a reasonably balanced Medicare proposal and he is playing politics with the issue.

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, let us just close with this, do we, members of the Republican freshman class, the sophomore class of the Republicans, do we want to shut down Government? Do we want Federal employees to be out of work tomorrow morning? Do we want the Republican Party to ruin this negotiation? Do we want one side to blink first?

The answer to all of that is no. What we want is a balanced budget. What we want is Medicaid restructured. What we want is welfare reform. What we want is tax relief for the middle class. And above all we want to save, protect and preserve Medicare.

We believe that there is plenty of room for a bipartisan agreement. Democrats and Republicans can come together for the children and the future of America. We are proud to participate in that process.

We hold our hands open for our Democrat colleagues who want to join us and we hope and pray that the President of the United States will work with the leaders of House and Senate to do what is best, not for either party, not for reelection, but for the American public.

I thank the gentleman from Illinois [Mr. LAHOOD], for being with me, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. WELDON], the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. CHABOT], the gentleman from Arizona [Mr. HAYWORTH], a night-time regular, and the gentleman from Kentucky [Mr. LEWIS], for this special order.

□ 2245

THE MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEMS FACING OUR COUNTRY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, the gentleman from Vermont [Mr. SANDERS] is recognized for 50 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. Speaker, while we await an understanding of the meeting taking place in the White House now between the President and the Republican leadership, let me review for my fellow Vermonters and for people throughout this country what I consider to be some of the most important problems facing this country, talk a little bit about some solutions that I think make sense to many millions of Americans, and then talk about how the Contract With America impacts all of that.